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Amash introduces bill to repeal the Jones Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. Justin Amash (L-Mich.) today introduced the Jones Act Repeal Act to repeal the protectionist transportation policies known as the Jones Act.

To transport passengers or cargo between ports in the United States, federal law requires commercial ships to be U.S.-built, owned, and crewed. This has led to collateral consequences in the transportation industry as well as increased shipping and transportation costs in the United States that ultimately hurt American consumers. These costs were highlighted in 2017 after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, which is disproportionately affected by the Jones Act.

The purported intent of the Jones Act is to ensure a large U.S. merchant fleet and sufficient domestic shipbuilding capacity in case of national emergencies, but it is ineffective at achieving those goals: Our fleet of large, oceangoing vessels that are Jones Act-compliant has dwindled to 99 ships—with less aggregate shipping capacity than the Jones Act fleet in 1950—and U.S. shipbuilding has remained in a long decline. The Jones Act imposes substantial costs that make the U.S. shipping industry uncompetitive, with estimates from the 1990s that put the cost of U.S. shipbuilding at three times the cost of foreign-built ships, and likely even higher now.

The Jones Act Repeal Act fully repeals the Jones Act, allowing vessels to transport cargo and passengers between U.S. ports without meeting its burdensome requirements.

“The Jones Act fails to achieve its aims and increases costs for all Americans, but it survives because of lobbying by the special interests who benefit from its protectionism,” said Amash. “As a matter of fairness and sound economic policy, it’s time to eliminate it.”

Bill text is attached.

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